

## Allan Lancaster – Scindian Convict #57

The Millbank Prison register described Allan Lancaster as “a most daring and reckless character”. His prison record showed convictions for one former felony, one summary offence and four court-martials. The crimes for which he was sentenced to fourteen years’ transportation were breaking out of Congleton prison in Cheshire and stealing seven hens and a cock.

At the age of 17 on 23 November 1829, Lancaster enlisted as a Private in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of Foot of the Scots Guards. He appears to have served without incident until 25 September 1833 when his service record indicates that he was “*Tried by a Garrison Court Martial. Sentenced to three months Imprisonment with Hard Labour. Imprisoned 26 Sept to 24 Dec with one day remitted.*” After serving another five years he was again court-martialled, this time for the crime of habitual drunkenness and the use of improper language to a sergeant and sentenced to 120 days imprisonment which ended on 15 June 1839. A further two years was served before Lancaster faced his third court-martial. This time it was for disgusting and indecent conduct for which he received the sentence of 40 days imprisonment and was released on 29 November 1845. The date of his release was also the date of his discharge from the Scots Guards. He had served 14 years and 104 days and, released at the age of 33, unfortunately, he soon found himself in further trouble with the civilian courts.

Lancaster was born in Biddelmoor, Staffordshire. Information was collected in the 1890s about the people of Biddulph Moor on the far north-west border of Staffordshire adjoining Cheshire county. The people there were thought to be descendants of a group of Saracens brought home at the time of the Crusades (between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries) by the Lord of the local manor. They spoke their own dialect thought to include words of Arabic origin. They lived in scattered houses over the moor and wore their hair short in the front and hanging long in the back. Was Lancaster a descendant of the Biddulph Moor Saracens?

After his capture, following his escape from Congleton prison, Lancaster was held in Knutsford prison in Cheshire both during and after his trial until being sent to Millbank Prison on 1 February 1848. He was moved from there to Reading Prison on 5 July 1848 and subsequently to Portland Prison on 28 June 1849. He was collected on 28 February 1850 for transportation to Western Australia aboard the *Scindian*.

His physical description when transported to Western Australia was described as: height 5' 10 1/2", brown hair, dark brown eyes, long visage, dark complexion, slight appearance. He also had skin marked with smallpox scars.

Lancaster was issued with his ticket-of-leave on 28 March 1851 and within six months or so his social issues and run-ins with authority became evident. In October 1851 and again in August 1852 he found himself in front of the Fremantle Courts charged with drunkenness and each time was fined 5 shillings and costs. In January of 1853 his transgression was worse when he stole three pound notes from someone’s bedroom. On this occasion he was sentenced to two years’ imprisonment with hard labour, and was discharged on 28 November 1854 after receiving a slight remission on his term of sentence. This was followed with a further

two months' imprisonment with hard labour from March to May 1855 for appropriation of prison property.

Despite his issues with authority Lancaster was petitioning for a conditional pardon to be issued. In March 1857 it was recorded:

*“Reg No 57 A. Lancaster has a balance of £ 3/ 2d to pay on a/c of his passage money, and will be recommended for his pardon on 21 February 1858. He cannot have a pass for the Sound.”*

He was clearly seeking to get away from Fremantle where he had had nothing but trouble. In July 1857 the Convict Establishment returns reported that he was one of only four Scindian convicts remaining on their books, the others being #4 John Larcombe, #5 Thomas Welsby and #44 Alexander Mathieson. His trade at this time was listed as being a servant.

*29 October 1857*

*This man has conducted himself altogether too badly for me to entertain his petitions for a moment. (Allen Lancaster). H. W. S.A.S Bunbury*

Even the smallest infraction now saw him back in prison such as on 19 November 1857 – Offence – Threatening language to Police and failing to provide change of residence – 3 months – discharged on ticket-of-leave on 28 March 1858. His continued bad behaviour was catching up with him and his appeal for a conditional pardon continued to be denied.

*30 April 1860*

*The reconvictions recorded against 57 A. Lancaster are so many that H.E. cannot sign C.P. in his favour. J.E.H, Guildford*

Ultimately, he was never issued with a conditional pardon and became an Expiree on 4 June 1868 when his original term of sentence plus additional time for reconvictions had been served. Freedom did not end his problems with the authorities. Eighteen months later he was back in front of the courts:

*Police Court Fremantle*

*Feb. 14 – Allan Lancaster, Exp., charged with being drunk, and assaulting his master, Mr. Albert. Fined 10s. or 7 days imprisonment.*

Later the same year the *Herald* newspaper reported:

*Fremantle Police Court, Wednesday November 23rd 1870*

*Allen Lancaster and John McMullen were charged by P.C. Moan with stealing a pair &c. of trowsers, of the value of thirty shillings, from Harwood's Hotel, and were sentenced to six month's imprisonment.*

From the late 1870s Lancaster began appearing on the magistrate's books not just for drunkenness and threatening or abusive behaviour towards police but also for vagrancy:

27.2.1877 - Aged 65 imprisoned for one month due to vagrancy, trade listed as cook and;

*57 Allan Lancaster, 72, assaulting Police, 2 months and Drunk 5/ or 7 days, sentenced in the Perth court.*

It was at least another ten years before Lancaster found some stability when he was admitted to the Old Men's Home in Perth to live out the remainder of his days. The *Inquirer* reported on 14 December 1892:

*In the Old Men's Home the following deaths have occurred from debility and senile decay...*

*Allan Lancaster, admitted in 1890, died Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>, 84 years.*

At the time of the report there were 144 men in the Depot.

Lancaster's final resting place was in the East Perth Cemetery where he was laid to rest on 4 November 1892 having died the previous day. His life could definitely be said as per the observations in the Millbank Prison register, to have been led in a most daring and reckless manner.

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#### Sources:

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